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ABSTRACT

This paper presents preliminary explorations of the nature of differences in first-name stereotypes among three ethnic groups. A total of 147 white, black, and Spanish teachers were divided into five subgroups determined by their geographic location (Miami, Florida to Atlanta, Georgia) and ethnic grouping. Each subject was asked to rate his or her impressions of some typical names using a seven-point scale for each of nine semantic differential subscales. Results indicated that there do appear to be differences in the content and quality of first-name stereotypes among teacher subgroups. These differences seem more pronounced for female first-names and for names thought to carry undesirable stereotypes. Additionally, there is some evidence of a chauvinistic masculinity-femininity set among the Florida ethnic groups. (SDH)

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ETHNIC FACTORS IN STEREOTYPES OF GIVEN NAMES

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Research in interpersonal perception has only recently begun to acknowledge and investigate the contaminating effects of variance associated with stereotyped association of desirable or undesirable personal qualities with particular names. Clearly, such name stereotypes do exist (e.g., McDavid & Harari, 1966; Lawson, 1971) and they appear further to determine approach or avoidance of the person making the stereotyped association to the person bearing a certain name (Blain & Ramirez, 1968). More specifically, in the area of education, name stereotypes apparently influence teachers' evaluations of students' products. Harari & McDavid (1973) asked experienced teachers to grade children's essays. The essays, which had previously been judged as comparably equivalent - neither good nor bad - were each linked with authorship by a desirable or undesirable male or female first-name. Essays authored by males and females with desirable first-names received significantly higher scores than essays bearing undesirable male and female first-names. In this context, this report describes a preliminary investigation of similarities and differences in the content of first-name stereotypes across certain ethnic lines.

METHOD

Subjects

Two subject populations were employed in this study. One group consisted of 91 teachers enrolled in graduate education classes at a large

urban university in Atlanta, Georgia, all but one of which were currently employed in one of the public school systems in the Atlanta metropolitan area. Fifty-two of these were White females, 22 were Black females, 14 were White males, and 3 were Black males. Teaching levels ranged from preschool and elementary through high school. For the Atlanta group as a whole, the median years of experience was 4.0, and median age was 30.

A second subject group consisted of 56 teachers attending in-service training in an urban south Florida school system. Within this group, there were 14 White females and 8 White males, 7 Black females and 5 Black males, and 16 Spanish-speaking females and 6 Spanish-speaking males. Teaching levels represented by the Florida sample ranged from elementary to high school. The median years of experience for the Florida groups was 2.0.

This overall total of 147 teachers, representing three ethnic groups (White, Black and Spanish) were designated into five subgroups: Atlanta White (AW) and Black (AB), Florida White (FW) and Black (FB), and Spanish-speaking (FS) for comparison purposes.

Procedure

Each subject was asked to complete a Semantic Differential rating scale consisting of 9 subscales (good-bad, strong-weak, wise-foolish, active-passive, serious-humorous, simple-complex, excitable-calm, sociable-unsociable, and masculine-feminine). Activity, Potency, and Evaluative factor scores were derived from these 9 subscales. While no statistical evaluation was carried out, it is apparent that the Semantic Differential scales are moderately intercorrelated with one another. The concepts rated on these 9 subscales included 14 male and 14 female names selected from "attractiveness" ratings by students and teachers and from previous

research findings (Harari & McDavid, 1973; Lawson, 1971; Busse and Helfrich, 1975; Buchanan & Bruning, 1970). The names used are shown in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 About Here

Standardized instructions were used for all subjects in both sample groups (Atlanta and Florida) but some of the names were changed for the Florida sample to include ethnic names appropriate to the area. Those names in Table 1 marked with an asterisk were replaced by the ethnic names listed at the bottom of Table 1 for the Florida sample. Each subject was asked to rate his/her impressions of some typical names using a seven-point scale for each of the Semantic Differential subscales. Name presentation order was varied from subscale to subscale and one of the subscales was inverted to reduce the possibility of a response set.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Mean Semantic Differential ratings were derived for each of the 28 names on each of the 9 subscales, and for each of the factor scores (Activity, Potency, and Evaluative). The names were then rank-ordered from low-to-high on each measure. The five names with the lowest scores and the five names with the highest scores were selected for examination. Where tied-ranks occurred, all the names assigned that rank were included. Because of the preliminary nature of this investigation, no effort was made to determine the probability of names falling closer to one end of the continuum or the other.

Ethnic differences for desirable and undesirable male first-names

are shown in Table 2. The same information for female first-names is listed in Table 3.

Insert Table 2 About Here

Caution must be exercised in interpreting these ethnic differences, since all of the groups are relatively small in size and factors such as sex, degree held, experience, level of teaching position, etc., are not specifically controlled. However, some obvious ethnic differences do exist in stereotypes associated with first-names for these particular ethnic subgroups. Similarity among ethnic subgroup ratings for names stereotyped as desirable seem somewhat greater than for names stereotyped as undesirable.

For male names, David, Michael, Robert, and Steven, are all rated relatively positively by all five ethnic subgroups. None of these names are rated as undesirable by any of the ethnic subgroups. In contrast, the name Elmer is viewed negatively by White and Black teachers but as less undesirable by Spanish teachers. Harold and Stanley are viewed as desirable names by Black teachers but Spanish and Florida White teachers rate these two names as connotating inactivity, weakness, badness, and femininity. Mario is viewed as active, good, and masculine by the FS group, but as weak by the FB group.

In addition, there are a number of unique stereotypes occurring among the different ethnic subgroups for male names. The FS group rates the name Victor as desirable but the name Juan as undesirable. Richard is a desirable name only for the FB group. Mark is a desirable name only for the AW group. And the AB group sees Henry as a desirable name but Sam as an undesirable name.

Insert Table 3 About Here

For female names, there is less overall similarity in the name ratings. While there is more agreement on names rated as undesirable, there seems to be less agreement on names commonly thought of as desirable. For example, Karen appears to be a desirable name for White and Black, but not for Spanish teachers. The same holds true for Susan. The most striking contrasts occur for the names Mabel and Stella. The FS group views Mabel as active, strong, good, and masculine. The FB group views Mabel as inactive, weak, and feminine. Stella is rated as active by the FS group but as inactive, weak, bad, and feminine by the FW group.

For females, there are fewer unique stereotypes than for males and these occur mostly for the FB group. Delores is a desirable name, but Carmen and Doris are both rated as undesirable names.

An interesting ethnic difference occurred among the Florida subgroups. The FS and the FB groups (and to a lesser extent the FW group) seem to hold rather traditional - almost chauvinistic - views about masculinity-femininity. Female names that connote activity, strength, and goodness are labeled as masculine. Female names that connote inactivity, weakness, and sometimes badness are labeled as feminine and sex-appropriate. For male names rated as inactive, weak, and occasionally bad, stereotyped associations are sex-inappropriate (feminine). One explanation for this might be the influence of the macho concept which clearly delineates what is masculine and what is feminine behavior in the Latin culture, but a more likely explanation (since the chauvinistic pattern appears to some extent in the three Florida ethnic groups only but not in the Atlanta groups) is that this sample of

subjects may have operated under a specific M/F set generated at the time of data collection. Further research is called for to clarify this observation.

SUMMARY

This research represents preliminary explorations of the nature of differences in first-name stereotypes among several ethnic groups. Restrictions of sample size and demographic characteristics of the subjects used in this study require that these results be interpreted conservatively. There do appear to be differences in the content and quality of first-name stereotypes among teacher groups consisting of members of White, Black, and Spanish subgroups located in two southern urban areas, Atlanta and Miami. These differences seem more pronounced for female first-names and for names thought to carry undesirable stereotypes. Additionally, there is some evidence of a chauvinistic masculinity-femininity set among the Florida ethnic groups.

Table 1

LIST OF MALE AND FEMALE FIRST-NAMES
RATED BY WHITE, BLACK, AND
SPANISH TEACHER GROUPS

MALE NAMES	FEMALE NAMES
David	Karen
George*	Bernice*
Stanley	Hilda*
Steven	Lisa
Michael	Bertha
Elmer	Minnie*
Leroy	Emma*
William*	Gladys
Sam*	Susan
Henry*	Hattie*
Harold	Linda*
Mark*	Anne(a)
Ralph*	Doris
Robert	Denise
Miguel	Maria
Juan	Ethel
Pedro	Mabel
Victor	Delores
Mario	Stella
Richard	Carmen
	Martha

*Names below broken line were substituted for names with asterisks for Florida sample.

Table 2

SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL RATINGS FOR MALE
FIRST-NAMES BY WHITE, BLACK, AND SPANISH TEACHERS

Name	Ethnic Group	Semantic Differential Scales											
		Good Bad	Strong Weak	Wise Foolish	Active Passive	Serious Humorous	Complex Simple	Sociable Unsociable	Excitable Calm	Masc Fem	Act	Pot	Eval
DAVID	AW	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+
	FW	+	+	+	+	+			+	+		+	+
	AB	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+
	FB							+	+				
	FS	+	+	+	+	+						+	+
ELMER	AW	-	-	-	-	-	-	-			-	-	-
	FW	-		-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-
	AB	-				-	-	-	-		-		-
	FB	-	-		-	-				-	+		
	FS												
HAROLD	AW							-				-	-
	FW	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
	AB									+			
	FB							-	-		-	-	-
	FS	-	-	-	-	-	-						
LEROY	AW					-	-	+				-	-
	FW	-	-	-									-
	AB					-	-	-	-			-	-
	FB	-	-	-	-	-							
	FS												

(continued)

Table 2 Continued

Name	Ethnic Group	Good Bad	Strong Weak	Wise Foolish	Active Passive	Serious Humorous	Complex Simple	Sociable Unsociable	Excitable Calm	Masc Fem	Act	Pot	Eval
MICHAEL	AW	+	+		+	+	+	+		+	+	+	+
	FW	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	AB	+				+	+	+			+		+
	FB						+						
	FS						+				+		
ROBERT	AW		+	+									
	FW	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	
	AB		+	+	+					+	+	+	+
	FB	+	+	+	+	+				+	+	+	
	FS	+	+		+		+	+	+	+	+	+	+
							+	+			+	+	+
STEVEN	AW		+	+	+	+	+						
	FW	+	+	+		+	+			+		+	+
	AB	+				+	+		+	+	+	+	
	FB						+						+
	FS												
STANLEY	AW												
	FW												
	AB		+			-							
	FB								-	+		+	
	FS	-	-	-	-	-		-	-		+		-
GEORGE	AW												
	AB								-				
									-				
HENRY	AW												
	AB		+	+									
									-	+		+	
MARK	AW	+	+	+	+								
	AB	+	+				+			+	+	+	+
								+					

Table 2 Continued

Name	Ethnic Group	Good Bad	Strong Weak	Wise Foolish	Active Passive	Serious Humorous	Complex Simple	Sociable Unsociable	Excitable Calm	Masc Fem	Act	Pot	Eval
RALPH	AW AB								-				
SAM	AW AB		-	-	-	-					-	-	
WILLIAM	AW AB		-			+ +			-				
JUAN	FW FB FS						-		-	-	-		
MARIO	FW FB FS	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+	-	+
MIGUEL	FW FB FS			+		+			+	+			
PEDRO	FW FB FS	-	-	- -	- -	-		- -			-		- -
RICHARD	FW FB FS	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
VICTOR	FW FB FS	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+		+	

Table 3

SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL RATINGS FOR FEMALE
FIRST-NAMES BY WHITE, BLACK, AND SPANISH TEACHERS

Name	Ethnic Group	Semantic Differential Scales											
		Good Bad	Strong Weak	Wise Foolish	Active Passive	Serious Humorous	Complex Simple	Sociable Unsociable	Excitable Calm	Fem Masc	Act	Pot	Eval
ANNE(A)	AW	+				+	+			+			
	FW												
	AB				+		+		+		+		
	FB												
	FS		+				+	+	+		+	+	
BERTHA	AW	-		-	-		-	-			-		-
	FW	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	+			
	AB	-		-	-			-			-	-	-
	FB							-	-				
	FS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
DORIS	AW								+				
	FW												
	AB								-				
	FB	-	-			-	-	-		+	-	-	
	FS	-			-		-	-					
GLADYS	AW	-	-		-							-	-
	FW	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
	AB			-									
	FB	-	-	-				-	-		-		
	FS					-				+			
KAREN	AW				+			+		+	+		
	FW	+			+			+		-	+		+
	AB				+		+	+		+	+		+
	FB	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+
	FS	-	-			-	-			+	-	-	

Table 3 Continued

Name	Ethnic Group	Good Bad	Strong Weak	Wise Foolish	Active Passive	Serious Humorous	Complex Simple	Sociable Unsociable	Excitable Calm	Fem Masc	Act	Pot	Eval
LISA	AW	+		+				+		+	+		+
	FW	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+
	AB	+	+		+			+		+			+
	FB					+							
	FS					+							
SUSAN	AW							+		+	+		
	FW	+		+			+	+			+		
	AB			-		-					+		
	FB	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-		+	+
	FS		-				-			+	-	-	
BERNICE	AW							-					
	AB								+				
DENISE	AW								+				
	AB			+		+							
EMMA	AW				-			-			-		
	AB				-	+	-	-	+		-	-	-
HATTIE	AW		-	-		+	-		-			-	
	AB	-	-	-	-		-	-			-		-
HILDA	AW								+		-		
	AB									+		-	
LINDA	AW								+	+			
	AB			+					+	+	+		+
MINNIE	AW	-	-	-	-	+	-		+		-	-	-
	AB	-	-		-		-				-	-	

(continued)

Table 3 Continued

Name	Ethnic Group	Good Bad	Strong Weak	Wise Foolish	Active Passive	Serious Humorous	Complex Simple	Sociable Unsociable	Excitable Calm	Fem Masc	Act	Pot	Eval
CARMEN	FW FB FS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
DELORES	FW FB FS	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	-		+	+
ETHEL	FW FB FS	-	- -	- -	-	-		- -	-	+ +		- -	- -
MABEL	FW FB FS	- +	-	- +	+	- +	- +	-	- +	+ -	- +	- +	+
MARIA	FW FB FS	- +			+			- +		+			+
STELLA	FW FB FS	-	-	- +	-	- +	-	-	- +	+	- +	-	-

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